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FAUSTINE TO ALGERNON.

Was life worth living then,
Or is it now? — SWINBURNE'S FAUSTINE.

POET, who callest me,
In rhymes so bitter-sweet,
That far and far, through soundless space,
I hear the rhythm beat,
And hear thy low cry pierce
To where I am — across
The driving stars I look and lean
And ask, "What wilt thou of Faustine,
To know her gain or loss?"

O tremulous, fair star,
Where once I lived my day,
The breath of passion and despair
Floats up from thee alway.
And now, thy poet cries,
Through all my joys that intervene,
"Where are thy bones, thy bones, Faustine?"
Across the smiling skies.

Where are the last year's leaves
From off the growing tree?
The mould it grows from, — as the shape
Men worshiped is to me.
Who knows? — the sweet white flower
Upon my whiter breast
Some atom of the old Faustine
May harbor; and corruption clean,
Bloom from the flesh-worm's nest.

Ah, that was time long gone,
When to my dimpled chin
(Soft dimple, made alone
By kisses dinted in) —
And under the long fringe
Of lids set eyes above,
The cold worm crawled and fed, unseen
Of lovers who had loved Faustine
When she was warm with love.

The close chrysalides
That held these lovers, too
Did crumble — out in glittering fields,
Their longing spirits flew.
Then he who loved me best,
Whose fiery heart was true,
Found out, through mystic laws, his queen,
And to the soul of his Faustine
His soul in rapture drew.

And O what life was this,
What love, what love was this,
When through and through us ran and thrilled
That intermingling kiss?
Far as the soul can see,
Deep as the soul can fall,
Sweet as all sweetness dreamed between,
Thy birth and death, who call'st Faustine,
It sank; and yet we knew
That we had not known all.

O poet! crying far,
With bitter-sweet, sad moans,
Thou hast a thought to measure life
By a dead beauty's bones.
Not with all space unrolled
Canst thou set bounds to me;
For I am all that e'er has been
Or will be; yet am I Faustine
Who softly answers thee.

—M. V. Victor.

MRS. GRAY'S SPARE ROOMS.

"ARE you sure this is the place?" asked Charles Ventnor, giving a look of surprise at the handsome brown-stone front before which the carriage had just stopped. "I never knew there was a boarding-house in this block."

"This must be the house," said his sister, glancing at a card she held in her hand; "284—yes, that is the number Mrs. Duval gave me; and, Charlie, I believe I will go in with you, and then, if the rooms suit me, I can engage them at once." And, as she said this, Mrs. Loring descended from the carriage and followed her brother up the long flight of steps.

Their ring was answered by a servant in livery, and they were ushered into a small reception-room, which was so perfect in all its appointments that Mrs. Loring gave a little sigh of satisfaction as she glanced around, saying,

"I believe, Charlie, that at last I have found a place which will just suit me."

"You ought indeed to be suited, if all the house is like this," replied her brother; "for this room is certainly charming."

It was indeed a very pretty room. The floor was covered with a carpet of pale drab, dotted over with bunches of forget-me-nots; the windows were hung

with lace draperies, over satin hangings of a perfect forget-me-not hue; the chairs and ottomans were all of the same color; and the few exquisite paintings on the wall were framed in gilt, with borders of pale blue velvet; costly bronzes adorned the mantel; a curiously carved table, in the centre of the room, held a golden vase filled with rare hot-house flowers, and a little gleam of October sunshine that stole in at the window, lingered lovingly on an exquisite marble cupid which rested on a gilt stand.

Scarcely had Charlie Ventnor completed his survey of the room, when the door opened, and a young girl entered who looked as if she might be the presiding genius of the place, for her dress was of a soft drab material, relieved by knots of pale blue at her throat and in her hair. She was very attractive, though there was not a single regular feature in her face; but it was so bright and intelligent, and she had that graceful, dainty air, which is often as pleasing as real beauty. Her hair was really beautiful, of that golden shade which is so often described and so seldom seen. She advanced with graceful ease, and said in a very sweet voice:

"I believe you wish to see my sister; but as she is unfortunately not at home, I thought that perhaps you could leave your message with me."

Mrs. Loring at once proceeded to business. "I came at Mrs. Duval's suggestion, to look at your spare suite of rooms," she said; "but if it is not convenient for you to show them to me, I will come in again when your sister is at home."

"There is no need of troubling you to do that," the young lady replied. "If you have heard of the rooms through Mrs. Duval, and would like to see them, I shall be very happy to show them, though they are not at all remarkable."

"I assure you," replied Mrs. Loring, "that I do not care for any thing remarkable. All I wish is to find a pleasant home for the winter."

A little surprised look came into the girl's face as Mrs. Loring said this; but she immediately rose, and saying, "Come with me, then, if you please," led the way from the room.

When they reappeared again after a few minutes, Charlie Ventnor knew by the expression of his sister's face, that she was much pleased with what she had seen; but she said nothing till they had bidden the young lady good morning, and were in the carriage once more. Then she began:

"O Charlie, the rooms up-stairs are lovely, even prettier than the one you saw! The two which she showed me are furnished in crimson, and are in the most perfect taste. I do hope I shall be able to secure them."

"I only wonder that such a remarkable boarding-house is not better known. Did you ever hear of it before?" asked her brother.

"No," replied Mrs. Loring; "but then, that is not at all strange, for Mrs. Duval told me that it had only been open a short time. But will you go with me to-morrow? I am to be there at ten o'clock, to see Mrs. Gray, when we are to make all the final arrangements."

"Certainly, I will with pleasure. I am anxious to see more of this house, which I begin to think is an enchanted palace, of which this 'yellow-haired lassie' is the princess."

So the next morning found them at Mrs. Gray's door, punctually at ten o'clock. The lady of the house proved to be as charming in manner as her sister; but when, after a few commonplaces, Mrs. Loring explained the object of her call, Mrs. Gray seemed so much astonished, that in spite of her efforts to conceal her amazement, Mrs. Loring perceived it sufficiently to rouse a suspicion in her mind, but she went on boldly:

"Perhaps your sister did not tell you that we were here yesterday looking at your spare suite of rooms, of which I had heard through Mrs. Duval, and with which I was so much pleased that I will take them at almost any price."

"There must be some very great mistake about this matter," Mrs. Gray said. And with that she rang the bell, and when the servant came in answer to the summons, said: "Tell Miss Bessie I would like to see her a moment."

A most awkward silence fell on the trio after this, and it was a great relief to all of them when the young lady at length made her appearance. She came into the room in such a hesitating way, and with such a mingled look of shame and fun on her face, that Charlie Ventnor thought her more attractive than ever.

"Bessie," said her sister in rather a grave tone, "can you explain this extraordinary proceeding to me?"

The girl blushed, hesitated a moment, and then said frankly:

"Yes, sister Kate, I can. It was all my fault, and I am perfectly ashamed of myself; but you see when this lady and gentleman called yesterday, I did not understand at first what they wanted, and though I thought it very strange for Mrs. Duval to send any one to look at our spare rooms, yet, still as she had sent them, I did not like to refuse them, and it was not till the lady said something about wishing to find a pleasant home for the winter that I began to understand the matter. Then the spirit of fun possessed me, and I showed her the rooms, talking all the while as if we had kept a boarding-house for the last twenty-five years."

"Really, Bessie, I am perfectly surprised," began Mrs. Gray; but there was no use endeavoring to reprove the girl, for she looked so pretty as she stood there before them, and the deep look of contrition she had assumed, blended with the amusement she could not disguise, was so irresistible, that Mrs. Gray's reproof ended in a laugh in which they all joined. But in a moment Bessie grew serious again, and turning to Mrs. Loring, said:

"I can not tell you how ashamed I am of my unladylike conduct. I only wish I could do something to make amends for it."

"Pray do not think any thing more about it," replied Mrs. Loring; "though you do not know what a disappointment it is to me to give up my elegant suite of rooms," she added laughingly; "for I am afraid I shall find great difficulty in being suited now."

After a little more desultory conversation, the brother and sister left the house, but not without promises to continue the acquaintanceship so unpropitiously begun, and by way of finding out more about these charming people, they drove to Mrs. Duval's. That lady's merriment was very great when she heard the story.

"Oh, my dear!" she said to Mrs. Loring, "I told you the number was 384, not 284. Only think of your going there to look for rooms. Mr. Gray has only recently come here, but he is said to be one of the richest men in New York; his wife belongs to one of the oldest families in the country, and her sister is heiress to an immense estate. But there is no harm done after all," she continued; "you will find them charming acquaintances, and Charlie, if you can come to my musicale to-morrow evening, I will take care that you have a formal introduction to Miss Bessie."

It is needless to say that Charlie Ventnor was one of the earliest guests to arrive at Mrs. Duval's on the following evening, but that lady's promise was destined never to be fulfilled, for it chanced that one of the first persons he met on entering the rooms was the "yellow-haired lassie." She held out her hand to him in the most cordial manner, saying: "I am very much obliged to Mrs. Duval for giving me an opportunity of making my apologies to you again, Mr. Ventnor. The more I think about my conduct the more ashamed I feel of it; but really I can not help laughing when I remember what a distressed expression you all wore yesterday when I came into the room."

There was no resisting this girl, for she had such a frank, unaffected way about her, that it was impossible to feel like a stranger with her very long, and before the evening was over, she and Charlie felt almost like old friends.

Late in the evening, Mrs. Duval remembered her promise, but when, after some search, she discovered them in the conservatory, a single glance assured her that their acquaintance would probably progress favorably without any assistance from her. With Charlie it was clearly a case of love at first sight. All through the winter he was her loyal and devoted knight; the colors on his shield henceforth were blue and golden, and the scene of his tournaments was the little blue room. So one morning in spring, when he came in and found Bessie decking the marble cupid with forget-me-nots, blue as her own eyes, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to tell her how a winged arrow from the little god had entered into his heart; and when, a few moments later, the golden hair rested upon his shoulder, and the sweet blue eyes looked up so lovingly at him, he knew that the "yellow-haired lassie" was his forever.

—H. M. Wright.